

Broadway Hotel  
Lexington Ky

Oct 13<sup>th</sup> 1865-

My Darling Wife

I have not written you for several days because I have been in the go and only returned last night. I spoke here last night to an immense crowd of Colored people. Dr. Marry from London England and Mr. Coffin of Cincinnati are with me. Mr. Marry is the distinguished man who raised and sent to this country last year over two hundred thousand dollars for our poor. He also defended us long disputes in our country against the secession party in England. Eli Coffin is the celebrated abolitionist who before the war received into his house fed and sent on their way reinforcing over three thousand fugitive slaves. Eli is very rich and now lives in Cincinnati. These are my travelling companions except I may add both are preachers. I go to Louisville this morning and will speak there to night - From Louisville we will go to Bowling Green and then back to Lexington - I am now making my long promised tour over the state. I am every where well

need especially by the blacks who would carry me in their arms if they could.

To day when I get to Sumner I will get my leave for 20 made out and put it in my pocket so as to be ready to go. I hope you will not need me before next month - comes in as it will suit me much better than to go. Still I am ready to go whenever you need me. My surmision is you will not be sick before Oct 30 or Nov 20<sup>th</sup>.

I have been relieved of Command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Div and have now only the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade some three thousand men under my Command. I will therefore have more time hereafter and am glad of it. Gen Jeff C Davis relieves me in Command of the Division and I only got the order yesterday, not well satisfied nor contented I am homesick and long to be home with you.

Gen Reassers the Congressman is fighting me at Washington but don't seem to make much head way - Jack Parsons writes that both the President and Stanton are favorable to me and that I will soon be made a Major General - This does not look like a removal - I grieve I have got too

strong for Kentucky politicians; at all  
events I am not afraid of them

I got up  
this morning too early for the train and  
have spent the time in writing to you  
I have now only a little while to eat and  
get to the Cars - It is 3 o'clock and 10  
minutes not yet light but I must go  
Goodbye - God bless - Write often - I will  
write you to morrow or next day

Yours

Jim

Head Quarters  
U S Cold Troops  
Lexington Ky  
Sept 20<sup>th</sup> 1864

Dear wife

It is now a week since you left, and I have not heard from you. I hope you went directly home but I doubt it or you could have written ere this. I have been looking for a letter for some days. I hope I will get one to-morrow. If I do not it will be a month until I do get one. To-morrow evening I leave for the front. The Army moved this morning and Wade with his Regt is to night at Mount Sterling thirty three miles from here. Genl Burbridge and myself will go on to-morrow and we expect to overtake the Army at Beaver which is 90 miles from here. Genl Burbridge said last night that he would send me on today to Command the Army in his name until he came up but I did not think I was fit to Command the Army, and I told him so - even for a day.



Genl Thomas was here - Genl Burbridge  
and myself went up to Louisville with  
him - We came back last night on  
a special train

I got Genl Thomas to  
make Jim a full Colonel and he now  
wears the Eagle - I got Bub Carpenter  
and Lunt Coats appointed Lunt Colonels  
of Cavalry - I also got Dr Hunters ap-  
pointed as a full Surgeon with the  
rank of Major and I sent it to him  
today.

I have been very busy since you  
left and it is now late - I was up  
in Mrs Burbridge's room to-night - she  
asked for you and wants you to come  
back - I will try and write you from  
Beaver after which there will be no  
communication and it will be some  
time before we get back out of the  
mountains so I can write you again

Yours affectionately

Husband

Jim

I do wonder what you are doing - Oh if I could only see you - My baggage is all on board the Boat and we will go up the River as soon as the Ribbles will let us - I think they will be done away in a day or two - I am anxious to go up for I want to see Genl Banks and make arrangements about going home - I do hope he will let me go but if he does not I will send for you as soon as things get a little settled - I hope to get home by the middle of June - As soon as I see Banks I will write and let you know all about it - Wade is not out sitting at the table writing to his Mother - Henry his brother has been appointed a 1st Lieut in my Regt - I intend having Lieut Carpenter made a Major in it -

Oh wife darling how lonely I am without you but I will bear it all asking God Almighty to bless and protect you - Write very often - Love Ripes

Yours Own  
Genl McNeil is here with me - I am getting so fat and am in fine health - you would hardly know me I am so fat & hearty -

# Office Chief of Cavalry,

DEPARTMENT OF THE GULF.

New Orleans May 8<sup>th</sup> - 1864

Dear Little Pet

This is Sunday and I am so lonely - Jim Wade is here - he came in yesterday - he could not reach the Army on account of the Rebel batteries on Red River between this City and the ~~River~~ <sup>Army</sup> - The Rebels opened on the Boats with Canon - three Steamers & two Gunboats were captured by the Rebels and 4 Colonels and some two hundred men killed wounded and taken prisoners

Wade did well - he escaped unhurt and brought off on his boat the 56<sup>th</sup> Ohio Infantry but for his interposition would have been captured by the Enemy - Wade gets much credit for his Conduct and I am glad he so distinguished himself -

This is a dry warm day and I have the horses - I am going out riding but it is so warm - I thought Wade and I would ride down to the Lake

but it is so hot I think we ~~can~~ will not  
go - It is a beautiful road out to the lake  
and the lake is a beautiful place

I am  
thinking all day how I would like to  
be home with you - I wish I could see  
you you dear little darling - I almost  
can see you sitting at your window and  
thinking of your absent one - God bless  
you - what would I do without you - I am  
so happy even in having such a darling  
though I can't see you - I am so proud  
of you - you are so good and beautiful  
I love you more and more every day  
It is now five months since I saw you  
- a long time - it seems years - but thank  
God you are safe - in a healthy place &  
well cared for -

A ship will be in today  
and I am confident I will get letters from  
you by it - I have not had a word from  
you for a long time - the mails are so  
uncertain - I write often but I suppose  
you do not get half of my letters

# Head Quarters, Cavalry Division,

DEPARTMENT OF THE GULF.

Natchitoches

April 4<sup>th</sup> — 1864

Dearest Wife

I sit down again to write you. The mail goes out to day - this is the first mail we have had since my last letter to you at Alexandria - we have been on the march ever since - A good deal of Skirmishing has taken place but no pitched battle - The enemy fell back before us Skirmishing constantly with our advance guard - Yesterday we advanced beyond the town and found the Rebel Army drawn up on a hill Called Pleasant Hill - We had a little fight and then fell back to wait re-enforcements - I do not think the Rebels will retreat any further - Pleasant Hill is a strong position and they will fight - Some of our Infantry are up and Ten thousand more are near here coming on. We are preparing for battle and to morrow or next day will go out and attack the Rebels. It will be a hard battle and the result in my mind is doubtful - The Rebels have nearly as many men as we have and they have the advantage of position - we will have to climb up the sides of the steep hill and attack them - Our troops are confident and we

hope for the best - If we succeed the Rebellion on  
this side of the Mississippi will be at an end  
Many will fall in to morrows fight - God grant  
I may not be among the slain -

A large mail -  
Came in Yesterday and every body got letters but  
one - I was sure I had some in the mail but  
not a word - it is now nearly two months since  
I left home and in all that time not one word  
My Mail from Brepshear City Came up but  
there were no letters from you - I have now  
lost all hope of hearing from you - Have you  
forsaken me entirely or what is the matter  
Have you left your home? For gods sake  
Jame write me and end this horrible suspense  
Eight letters go North in this Mail inquiring  
after you - If I cannot hear from you  
I will get others to write me about you  
This Army will soon have to go back to New Orleans  
or near there - I will tell you why - We get our  
supplies by way of Red River and red river  
falls every year about June so that the Boats  
cannot get up this far - Some say it is falling  
now so we will have to get out of this soon  
What is done must be done quickly and the  
Expedition cannot last more than a month  
or so longer - When it is over you shall  
Either Come South or I will go North - I  
am



Canst and I wont come till I hear from you and  
know all is right at home - If ~~you feel and that~~  
~~is wrong you cannot come to me - I would not~~  
~~live with a woman who did not behave herself~~  
~~to the satisfaction of my little wife would do any~~  
~~thing wrong no not the Devil not not~~  
Child who was kind and loved on by a husband  
as you are by me - It is only women whose  
husbands neglect and abuse them that are bad -  
I hear I am recommended for a General of course  
you will be glad? The world prospers with me  
and if it were not for this being away from you  
I would be perfectly happy - I am kindly treated  
here and have easy times - We have not much  
to eat but that is nothing - I have not seen butter  
on any table for weeks, ~~then~~

When we came into this  
city we found a Printing Press in the town - The  
Editor had gone of off - I took some printers out  
of the Regiments and issued a paper - We sold  
it and the papers went off like hot cakes - We  
could not print them as fast as they sold - After  
paying all expenses I found I had cleared on that  
one copy of the paper over four hundred dollars  
There is Yankee enterprise for you - The Press is  
now clearing over two hundred dollars a day  
I always told you I could make money - I believe  
if I was out of the Army I would make a large

fortune - As an Officer of the Army of course I could  
not keep all the money as it is against the Regulation  
to speculate - There is a ~~Convent~~ <sup>Convent</sup> ~~from~~ <sup>from</sup> Catholic -  
Convent here - the war has reduced them almost to  
necessity - I went up yesterday and presented the old  
Mother Abbess with Two Hundred and Fifty dollars  
She was glad to get it and with tears in her eyes  
thanked me - There are Thirty-Nine in the Convent  
They treated me splendidly and set out Cake and  
wine - I send you <sup>over</sup> a hundred dollars of our Confederate  
money as your share of the Newspaper enterprise - Of  
course you cannot use it up there but you can keep  
it to look at and if you come South to see me when  
I am a prisoner in Richmond you can use it - This  
Confederate money goes here just the same as Green  
backs in the North only things are very dear and you  
don't get much for a dollar - I will send you more if  
you want - I have my pockets full and think no  
more of Ten dollars in Confederate script than you do  
of five cents in green-backs - People here have no  
money but Confederate script - I am going to give our  
Hospital for the wounded Soldiers Two Hundred dollars  
As soon as I can get to see a Pay Master I will -  
send you some green-backs which will be of more  
use to you than this trash - Now Jane will you not  
write me - please do - direct your letter to me "In  
Care of Gen Lee near Dix's Dept of the Gulf" I will  
write you in a day or two again or as soon as a mail  
goes - Be patient - I hope soon to be with you or have  
you with me - God bless you my darling wife  
Love kisses from your devoted but lonely Jim

fortune - As an Officer of the Army of course I could  
not keep all the money as it is against the Regulation  
to speculate - There is a ~~Convent~~ <sup>Convent</sup> for Catholic -  
Convent here - the war has reduced them almost to  
necessity - I went up yesterday and presented the old  
Mother Abbe with Two Hundred and Fifty dollars  
She was glad to get it and with tears in her eyes  
thanked me - There are Thirty Nuns in the Convent  
They treated me splendidly and set out Cake and  
wine - I send you <sup>over</sup> a hundred dollars of our Confederate  
money as your share of the Newspaper enterprise - Of  
course you cannot use it up there but you can keep  
it to look at and if you come South to see me when  
I am a prisoner in Richmond you can use it - This  
Confederate Money goes here just the same as Green  
backs in the North only things are very dear and you  
don't get much for a dollar - I will send you more if  
you want - I have my pockets full and think no  
more of Ten dollars in Confederate Script than you do  
of five cents in green backs - People here have no  
money but Confederate Script - I am going to give our  
Hospital for the wounded Soldiers Two Hundred Dollars  
As soon as I can get to see a Pay Master I will -  
send you some green backs which will be of more  
use to you than this trash - Now Jane will you not  
write me - please do - direct your letter to me "In  
Care of Gen Lee near San Sept of the Gulf" I will  
write you in a day or two again or as soon as a mail  
goes - Be patient - I hope soon to be with you or have  
you with me - God bless you my darling wife  
Two kisses from your devoted but lonely Jim

Broadway Hotel  
Lexington KY  
Oct. 13th 1865

My Darling Wife

I have not written you for several days because I have been on the go and only returned last night. I spoke here last night to an enormous crowd of colored people. Dr. ? Massey ? From London England and Mr. ? Coffin of Cincinnati ? are with me. Mr. ? Massey is the distinguished man who raised and sent to this country last year over two hundred thousand dollars for our poor ?.He also defended ? Long ? Disputes our country against the secession party in England. Eli Coffin is the celebrated abolitionist who before the war received into his house ? And sent on their way. Reforcing ? Over three thousand fugitive slaves. Eli is very rich and now lives in Cincinnati.

These are my traveling companions except I may add both are preachers. I go to Louisville this morning and will speak there tonight. From Louisville we will go to Bowling Green and then back to Lexington. I am now making my long promised tour over the state. I am everywhere well received especially by the blacks who would carry me in their arms if they could. Today when I get to Louisville I will get my leave for 20 made out and put it in my pocket so as to be ready to go. I hope you will not need me before next month comes in as it will suit me much better then to go. ?? I am ready to go whenever you need me. My impression is you will not be sick before

Oct. 30 or Nov. 20th. I have been relieved of Command of the 1st ? Div. And have now only the ? Brigade some three thousand men under my command. I will therefore have more time hereafter and am glad of it. Sen. ? Jeff C. Davis relieves me in Command of the Division and I only got the order yesterday. I am not well satisfied nor contented. I get very lonesome and long to home with you. Genl. Reass.... the ???? is fighting me at Washington but don't seem to make much headway. Jack Passens ?? writes that both the President and Stanton are favorable to me and that I will soon be made a Major General. This does not look like a removal - I guess I have got too strong for Kentucky politicians; at all events I am not afraid of them.

I got up this morning too early for the train and have spent the time in writing to you. I have now only a little while to eat and got to the cars. It is 5 o'clock and 10 minutes not yet light but I must go. Good bye - God  
bless - write often - I will write you tomorrow or next day.

Yours Jim

Iowa Letters

Lexington Ky

Oct 19<sup>th</sup> 1868

My Dear Wife

I am quite uneasy about you. I have not heard from you for many days and fear you are sick. I think I will start for home and if I do not hear before long will go so as to get home next Saturday week. This is Thursday and it is more than likely I will leave here on Wednesday next. The fight still goes on in Kentucky - The Fifth and Sixth Cavalry Regts were ordered to be mustered out but we got the order revoked to day. I expect to be mustered out before long and if I am not I will resign this winter - at least my Commission as Brig Genl.

Gen Wade was ordered to be mustered out but the order is revoked and now he is to stay in. I have waited in my office for the



Mail me hope I would get a letter from you  
but have got none. I hope if you  
were to get sick you would have  
a telegram sent me at once  
I am most anxious to see you  
and your approaching illness weighs  
heavily on my mind.

There will be  
a convention of the leading men of  
the state here on Saturday and after  
that I am going home. I will stay  
20 days when I come and promise  
myself much pleasure in your  
society. I was in Summerville but  
did not see any one you knew  
I spoke there in the evening and  
left at noon next day. I will be  
so glad to get home after weeks  
out of the whirl and excitement  
I am fat as a bear but tired and  
need rest. How pleasant it will  
be to sit by the fire and talk with  
you. I am still at the Broadway  
Hotel and will stay there until I



you  
-  
ren  
yhs  
-  
g  
-  
y  
re  
-  
il  
-  
D  
e  
ke  
so  
D  
e  
to  
way  
L

Yours truly Affectionate  
Husband

Wm. G. Brewster

Lexington Ky

Oct. 19th 1865

My Dear Wife

I am quite uneasy about you. I have not heard from you for many days and fear you are sick. I think I will start for home and if I do not hear before long will go so as to get home next Saturday week. This is Thursday and it is more than likely I will leave here on Wednesday next. The fight still goes on in Kentucky. The fifth and sixth Cavalry Regiments were ordered to be mustered out but we got the order revoked today. I expect to be mustered out before long and if I am not I will resign this winter. At least my Commission as Brig. Genl.

Gen. Wade was ordered to be mustered out but the order is revoked and now he is to stay in. I have waited in my office for the mail in hope I would get a letter from you but have got none. I hope if you were to get sick you would have a telegram sent me at once. I am most anxious to see you and your approaching illness weights heavily on my mind. There will be a convention of the leading men of the state here on Saturday and after that I am going home. I will stay 20 days when I come and promise myself much pleasure in your society. I was in Louisville but did not see anyone you knew. I spoke there in the evening and left at noon next day. I will be so glad to get home. A few weeks out of this whirl and excitement. I am fat as a bear but tired and need rest. Now pleasant it will be to sit by the fire and talk with you. I am still at the Broadway Hotel and will stay there until I go home. I will not close my letter until tomorrow morning. Yes, I will and write you another tomorrow. I hope I will get a letter from you in the morning mail.

Very Respectfully  
Your Truly Affectionate Husband  
Jas. S. Brisbin

Iowa Letters

Head Quarters  
U. S. Colored Troopers  
Lexington, KY

Sept. 20th 1864

Dear Wife

It is now a week since you left and I have not heard from you. I hope you went directly home but I doubt it as you would have written me this. I have been looking for a letter for some days. I hope I will get one tomorrow. If

I do not it will be a month until I do get one. Tomorrow evening I leave for the front. The Army moved this morning and Wade with his Regiment is tonight at Mount Sterling thirty-three miles from here. Genl. Burbridge and myself will go in tomorrow and we expect to overtake the Army at Beaver which is 90 miles from here. Genl. Burbridge said last night that he would send me on today to Command the Army in his name until he came up but I did not think I was fit to command the Army and I told him so - even for a day. Genl. Thomas ? was here. Genl. Burbridge and myself went up to Louisville with him. We came back last night on a special train.

I got Genl. Thomas to make Jim a full Colonel and he now wears the Eagle. I got Bub Carpenter and Lieut. Coats appointed Lieut. Colonels of Cavalry. I also got Dr. Hunter's appointment as a full surgeon with the rank of Major and I sent it to him today.

I have been very busy since you left and it is now late. I was up to Mrs. Burbridge's farm tonight. She asked for you and wants you come back. I will try and write you from Beaver after which there will be no communication and it will be some time before we get back out of the mountains so I can write you again.

Your affectionate Husband Jim

(Letterhead) Office Chief of Cavalry  
Department of the Gulf  
New Orleans May 8th 1864

Dear Little Pet

This is Sunday and I am so lonely. Jim Wade is here. He came in yesterday. He could not reach the Army on account of the Rebel batteries on Red River between this City and the ????. The Rebels opened on the boats with cannon three steamers and two gunboats were captured by the rebels and 4 colonels and some two hundred men killed, wounded and taken prisoners.

Wade did well. He escaped unhurt and brought off on his boat the 56th Ohio Infantry but for his interposition would have been captured by the enemy. Wade gets much credit for his conduct and I am glad he is distinguished himself.

This is a dry warm day and I have the ???I am going out riding but it is so warm. I thought Wade and I would ride down to the lake but it is so hot I think we will not go. It is a beautiful road out to the lake and the lake is a beautiful place.

I am thinking all day how I would like to be home with you. I wish I could see you, you dear little darling. I almost can you sitting at your window and thinking of your absent one. God Bless you. What would I do without you. I am so happy even in having such a darling though I can't see you. I am so proud of you. You are so good and beautiful. I love you more and more every day. It is now five months since I saw you - a long tie - it seems years - but thank God you are safe - in a healthy place and well cared for.

A ship will be in today and I am confident I will get letters from you by it. I have not had a word from you for a long time. The mails are so uncertain. I write often but I suppose you not get half of my letters. I do wonder what you are doing. Oh, if I could only see you. My baggage is all on board the Boat and we will up the River as soon as the rebels will let us. I think they will be drove away on a day or two - I am anxious to go up for I want to see Genl. Banks and make arrangements about going home. I do hope he will let me go but if he does not I will send for you as soon as things get a little settled. I hope to get home by the middle of June. As soon as I see Banks I will write and let you know all about it. Wade is with me sitting at the table writing to his mother - Henry, his brother, has been appointed a 1st Lieut. In my Regiment. I intend having Lieut. Carpenter made a Major in it.

Oh wife, darling, how lonely I am without you but I will bear it all asking God Almighty to bless and protect you. Write very often - Two kisses Your own Jim

Genl. McNeil is here with me. I am getting so fat and am in fine health - you would hardly know. I am so fat and hearty.

Iowa Letters

April 4, 1864 - James Sanks Brisbin Letter To His Wife

for you. The Press is now clearing over Two Hundred Dollars a day. I always told you I could make money. I believe if I was out of the Army I would make a large fortune. As an Officer of the Army, of course, I could not keep all the money as it is against the Regulations to speculate. There is a poor ? Catholic Convent here. The war has reduced them almost to necessity ? I went up yesterday and presented the old Mother Abbess with Two Hundred and Fifty dollars. She was glad to get it and with tears in her eyes thanked me. There are thirty nuns in the Convent. They treated me splendidly and set out cake and wine. I send you over a hundred dollars of our Confederate money as your share of the Newspaper enterprise. Of course, you cannot use it up there but you can keep it to look at and if you come south to see me when I am a prisoner in Richmond you can use it. This Confederate money goes here just the same as green backs in the North only things are very dear and you don't get much for a dollar. I will send you more if you want it. I have my pockets full and think no more of ten dollars in Confederate Script than you do of five cents in green backs. People here have no money but Confederate Script. I am going to give our hospitals for the wounded soldiers Two Hundred Dollars. As soon as I can get to see a Pay Master I will send you some green backs which will be of more use to you than this trash. Now Jane will you not write me - please do - direct your letter to me "In care of Gen. Lee Cav Div Dept of the Gulf." I will write you in a day or two again or as soon as a mail goes. Be patient. I hope soon to be with you or have you with me. God bless you my darling wife.

Ten kisses from your devoted but lonely Jim



(Letterhead) Head Quarters, Cavalry Division  
Department of the Gulf  
Natchidoches April 4th 1864

Dearest Wife

I sit down again to write you. The mail goes out today. This is the first mail we have had since my last letter to you at Alexandria. We have been on the march ever since. A good deal of skirmishing has taken place but no pitched battle. The enemy fell back before us skirmishing constantly without advance guard. Yesterday we advanced beyond the turn and found the Rebel Army drawn up on a hill called Pleasant Hill. We had a little fight and then fell back to wait re- enforcements. I do not think the Rebels will retreat any further. Pleasant Hill is a strong position and they will fight. Some of our Infantry are up and ten thousand more are near here coming on. We are preparing for battle and tomorrow or next day will go out and attack the Rebels. It will be a hard battle and the result in my mind is doubtful. The rebels have nearly as many men as we have and they have the advantage of position. We will have to climb up the sides of the steep hill and attack them. Our troops are confident and we hope for the best. If we succeed the Revellion on this side of the Mississippi will be at an end. Many will fall in tomorrow's fight. God grant I may not be among the slain.

A large mail came in yesterday and everybody got letters but me. I was sure I had some in the mail but not a word. It is now two months since I left home and in all that time not one word. My mail from Breashear City ? came up but there were no letters from you. I have now lost all hope of hearing from you. Have you forsaken me entirely or what is the matter. Have you left your home? For God's sake Jane write me and end this horrible suspense. Eight letters go North in this mail inquiring after you. If I cannot hear from you I will get others to write me about you. This Army will soon have to go back to New Orleans or near there. I will tell you why. We get out supplies by way of Red River and red river falls every year about June so that the boats cannot get up this far. Some say it is falling now so we will have to get out of this soon. What is done must be done quickly and the expedition cannot last more than a month or so longer. When it is over you shall either come South or I will go North. I can't and I won't come till I hear from you and know all is right at home. (Following stricken out: If you ?? ?? ?? ?? ?? I would not live with a woman who did not behave herself. I do not believe my little wife would do anything wrong - no, no she could not - no woman could who was loved and doted on by a husband as you are by me. It is only women whose husbands neglect and abuse them that are bad.)

I hear I am recommended for a General, of course you will be glad. The world prospers with me and if it were not for this being away from you I would be perfectly happy. I am kindly treated here and have easy times. We have not much to eat but that is nothing. I have not seen butter on my table for weeks.

When we came into this City we found a Printing Press in the town. The Editor had gone off. I took some printers out of the Regiments and issued a paper. We sold it and the papers went off like hot cakes. We could not print them as fast as they sold. After paying all expenses I found I had cleared on that one cop of the paper over Four Hundred dollars. There is Yankee enterprise

Iowa Letters



(Letterhead) INSPECTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE,  
Headquarters, Department of the Gulf.

New Orleans, March 7th, 1864

Dearest Wife

A steamer from the North has just come in. I waited until the mails were all opened and hoped until the last letter was looked over that I would get one from you. Alas, I am disappointed - no letter again - a whole month and not one word from the woman I love better than my own life. Yet I do not blame you. I know you have written often but why I have not got your letters I cannot imagine. Oh what would I not give to have one letter from you but they will come by the next steamer won't they dearest so I will live in hope. We were to go away on tomorrow but the order is countermanded and we will not go till the day after (Tuesday) God grant I may hear from you before I start. This is Sunday and I am utterly lonely. Oh Jane how long is this bitter separation to last. I feel some times as if I could endure it no longer. I feel as if I must go to you. If I were going to stay here I could send for you. I fear it would be certain death to you here but I sometimes think it would be better for us to die together than to be thus separated - but in two days more I will be in the saddle and in the Field and far away from New Orleans so it would be useless for you to come as you could not get near me even if you were here. I am trying to get away from here. I like the place but it is too far away from you. I can't be contented for although I can not get to you it is some satisfaction to be as near you as the Army of the Potomac - My God did ever any man so love a woman - did ever any man so dote on a wife - but you are a good girl and deserve to be loved as much as I love you - all the warm affections of my heart are poured out upon you and I am glad you are so good and make me love you so much. Dearest wife, are you with child. I know you are not happy nor contented and I think of it day and night but bear up - try to get along and when we get once more together I will devote my life to making you happy and in trying in some measure by devotion and kindness to repaying for all you have suffered by this cruel separation. Remember I am thinking of you constantly. Pray for me.

Two kisses and may God bless you and keep you good and pure.

Your Jim

Camp 6th ???  
? Hd ? ?  
July 14th 1863

Dear Wife

I would have written to you last night but I got in late after a ride of 20 miles through the rain and I was so tired - I am now with my Regiment or rather what is left of it - I have not assumed command nor do I think I will  
- I reported to Genl. Mead this morning - His adjutant Genll - Genl Williams and I had a long talk - Genl. Patrick went up with me to Genl. Meads Hd Quarters. Genl. Patrick asked Williams to let me come to him with my Regiment and was urgent in the matter. Genl. Williams asked me what I wanted to do and said he would try and arrange it so as to suit me - I do not know what I will do yet. I can get almost any place I desire but I have not decided where I will go yet.

Genl. Smith is here and I guess he still thinks I belong to him. You know I was appointed on his staff at Harrisburg - After writing yo my letter the other night at Frederick I went to bed and when I got up in the morning I found that while I was asleep some one had broken open my room door and robbed me of all the money I had but one dollar and a half that was in my best pocket - the thief took my pocket book and it contained nearly two hundred dollars - I have commenced a suit in the Courts of Maryland against the Landlord and think I can recover the money or a part of it at least. This is a heavy lop on us but there is no use to fret. I wish I could catch the thief.

This morning we found out the Rebels were crossing the River - our troops made a rush ? But were too late the tail end of the Rebel Army was just going over and we caught it but got only fifteen hundred prisoners. I am lonely tonight but I feel very much at home here - I sent to Frederick today for some tin plates, knives and forks and a coffee pot. I will get a few troops together again and go to living in my old soldier way. I slept fine last night under a bit of canvas on some straw. We have nothing to eat here but hard tack, bacon and biscuit but it is good with sardines. I got a fine horse. I drew him from quarter Master Wagner. Wagner says he is a relation of ours - he is a Captain in the Regular Army. I saw Vice President ? And talked with him today. He is a very Common ? And a very nice old man. Everyone seems glad to see me back. All the officers inquired after you.

Wade Tupper Carpenter and Coats are all that are left. We are going after the Rebels in the morning. We will march at day light. I am sorry we did not get them. It would have ended the war nearly ? - I suppose you are very lively at home. Be contented and good. I miss you now more than ever - every minute I think of you. Oh if the cruel war was ended how happy we would be - but be patient all will end well - Let us love each other, more and more day by day and pray God we may be spared to meet and live happily together. I hope you get along well at home - be good and bear all for my sake - I am sleepy and as we march early I must get to bed - Good night love - I wish I were with you tonight.

Two Kisses from your Own Jim  
Iowa Letters

??? 6th M Cavalry  
Hartwood ??? Church

May 12, 1863

Dearest Wife

I received two letters from you this morning dated May 5th and 7th. You seem in low spirits- Come love, cheer up. You have no cause to be downhearted. I am well and so are you. We are both comfortable. True we are separated but we must bear that patiently - it will be over by and by - You talk strangely about me thinking you would betray me - no dearest I know you are a true woman and I do not doubt you. I know you love me with your whole soul and a woman who loves her husband as you do could not betray her husband - You must blame me if you did not hear oftener from me. Thousands of Rebels were between us and the lines and how could I write when you get no letters rest assured the fault is not mine. The Dutch got sadly thinned out at the last Battles - I wish I was sitting your own little room by your side. How happy we would be- but better days are in store - we are young and can wait a little while. By and by we will be very happy and apart no more - If Joshua wants money give him all you can spare - The interest from Oct. 1862 to April 63 is due on your bonds. You had better send the Bonds down to Bellefonte and John Harris? Will cut off the slips at the end and pay you the money on them. You had better sell them. I am now again in Command of the Regiment much to the delight of all in it - The Rebels got ?? body and breeches - I am only sorry that they did not kill the son of a bitch - but we are rid of him and that is all we need care for - I came near being captured yesterday - I was in a house getting a drink and four rebel troopers passed by - fortunately I was at the back part of the house and they did not see me on my horse - I was all alone and pretty well scared I tell you - The Rebel Cavalry came up to within a few rods of our camp yesterday and captured some men who had wandered out of camp ???? of the Doctor Forward ??? Dr. ? of our Regiment sends you his photograph for your album. I don't know when I will get home but in two months I think - it will be time then. I want to see you every 3 months at least and so I have so far. All the officers send you their regards - you are very popular with all the officers and so you should be for you are so good and kind I don't see how anyone can help liking you. Be of good heart ? Every day - give my love to mother and say I am well - Two kisses.

Your affectionate and devoted husband Jim

Camp ???  
Near Brandy Station, VA  
December 17, 1863

My Dear Wife

I received a letter from you this afternoon. I suppose you will be in Bellefonte before this reaches you. You say in your last letter you long to go home. Then go by all means. I am sorry you are not better contented. I fear I will not get home by New Years. A great many officers have gone home on leave. I made a second application to Genl. Pleasanton for leave but he refused me. I will try him again in a few days. I think it unkind in the general to not let me go but then you know I have been away so much and others who have been here since last winter want to go. I cannot complain when I think of this. Depend upon it then. I will make every exertion and I think you will see me one of these days. We are still unsettled here. We are in winter quarters. It is time but we are expecting to move soon over the Rappahannock. Do not send anything to me by Stuart ? We have plenty of everything here that we need. In answer to your inquiry after Lt. Madden and his wife. I can only inform you that the last I heard from him he was in Boston and I have no doubt he is there yet. Certainly I have no objections to your sending little presents to the officers of my Regiment. We had a letter from Lieut. Paulding today - Wade got it- Paulding is in Libby Prison Richmond. He says Stoll & Kern are well but they all long to get out of that - poor fellows - I have made great exertion to get Frank Fisher exchanged but in vain - you will please hand the enclosed letter to Dr. Fisher. I have again heard from Washington that I am to leave this Army. Mrs. Wade wrote to Jim today - that Senator Wade had seen the Secy. Of War about me and that the order had been made out sending me off from here - she did not say where I was to go - If I leave here I will come home and see you before I go anywhere else –

You say you are going to turn over a new leaf and manage our affairs to suit yourself - I am satisfied - I can assure you I have tried hard to manage them and have succeeded but poorly - I have many things I would like to tell you but will wait till I see you - my wife. I fear there is trouble ahead for you. God shield and protect you. I have been looking for a letter from some of your people - ? Promised to write me. I would be glad to hear from anybody - your write me little news in your letters and they are cold and formal. They are unlike the warm earnest letters you once sent me. Ah Jane, Jane, you do not love as you once did - separation is cooling your passion and you do not care for me as you once did - God bless you - I love you as no man ever loved a wife - write to me often and as long a letter as you can.

Your Jim

Iowa Letters

# James Sanks Brisbin letters to his wife Jane on file at The University of Iowa

Through Ben Foster, Yale University and a kin of James Sanks Brisbin, I received photocopies of the letters, transcribed herewith (where I couldn't read a word I inserted question marks):



NOTE: The following was found in the Civil War Times Illustrated Collection Archives of the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA. It is the custom of CWTI to pass on articles, etc. which they don't use for publication. CWTI received the transcription from Thomas B. Brumbaugh, Box 1648, Sta. B., Nashville, TN 37235, date unknown.

## Letters of General James S. Brisbin to His Wife

For the past decade, the family papers of General James Sanks Brisbin have been appearing in occasional small lots on the autograph and rare book markets. It is one of many too-familiar examples of the dispersal of an important archive which will never make its full scholarly impact, thus diminishing our knowledge of a crucial historical period, the career of a remarkable American soldier. The following eight letters, written by Brisbin to his wife, Elizabeth "Jennie" Boal Brisbin\*, are miscellaneous examples which the writer has assembled from a number of sources. Each of them, however, tells us a great deal of the energy, the pride, the deep compassion, and the moral integrity of the man.

Brisbin was born in Boalsburg, a village in Centre County, Pennsylvania, on May 23, 1837.<sup>1</sup> After a local academy education, he taught school for a brief period and began to read law, thus coming to develop his natural skills as a public speaker. He was well-known in the area as an anti-slavery orator. About the same time, Brisbin began editing a weekly newspaper, the Centre Democrat, at Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. Indeed, while scarcely more than a school boy, he had also enlisted in the Penns Valley Cadets, a unit of the Pennsylvania Militia. In 1859 he was elected captain, by 1860 was enlisted as a private in a regular Pennsylvania regiment, and on April 26, 1861, was appointed a second lieutenant in the First United States Cavalry.

Not long after, while leading a detachment of twenty recruits under fire at the First Battle of Bull Run, Brisbin was twice wounded and commended for having "employed his men usefully in endeavoring to stop the retreat of our forces and in resisting the pursuit of the enemy."<sup>2</sup> It may have been his own first experience under fire. On August 6, he was promoted to the rank of captain in the Sixth Cavalry under General Alfred Pleasonton. After fighting in the battle at Malvern Hill, July 1, the young officer was wounded August 23, 1862, in action at Beverly Ford, Virginia. Brevetted a major, he commanded cavalry of the Pennsylvania Militia at Gettysburg, July 1-3, 1863. Later that year he was sent to Louisiana to recruit a regiment of Negro cavalry, and March 1, 1864, was promoted to colonel of the Fifth United States Colored Cavalry. In April, Brisbin was wounded a third time at Sabine Crossroads, south of Shreveport, as he fought in Nathaniel P. Banks' ill-fated Red River campaign. He was then serving as chief of cavalry on the staff of General Albert L. Lee.

Writing to General George H. Thomas from Lexington October 20, 1864, Brisbin gives an account of a memorable action by a detachment of his Fifth Colored Cavalry at Saltville in western Virginia. His stirring letter is printed in the Official Records.<sup>3</sup> "The point to be attacked was the side of a high mountain, the rebels being posted about half way up behind rifle pits . . . of logs and stones. The rebels opened upon them a terrific fire, but the line pressed steadily forward. . . within fifty yards of the enemy. Here the negroes rushed upon the works with a yell, and after a desperate struggle carried the entire line, killing and wounding a large number . . . and capturing some prisoners."



# Letters of Gen. James S. Brisbin to His wife

Surely there must be no more eloquent defense of the much-maligned black in the Civil War than this account of extreme bravery under fire. "I have seen white troops fight in twenty-seven battles and I never saw any fight better," Brisbin wrote, reporting that "On the return of the forces, those who had scoffed at the colored troops on the march out, were silent."

Briefer campaigns in Tennessee and Arkansas, and recruiting duty in Kentucky occupied Brisbin until the end of the war. For a time he had been chief of staff to General Stephen Burbridge, who was in command of the District of Kentucky and later in Tennessee. By May 1., 1865, he had achieved the rank of brigadier in the volunteer service. He was also brevetted a major general of volunteers and a colonel in the regular army. Mustered out of the volunteers on January 15, 1866, Brisbin served with distinction in the post-war army, where much of his life was to be spent in difficult western posts. In 1876, as a major, he commanded the battalion of cavalry which formed part of General John Gibbon's column in the Little Big Horn Campaign, and in July 1877, he was in action against the Nez Perce. In pursuit of Sitting Bull, after the Custer massacre, he rode with General Nelson A. Miles and his troops for a grueling and futile twenty-two days across Missou northeast Montana to the Canadian border.<sup>4</sup> In 1889 he was promoted to the rank of colonel in the First United States Cavalry.

In spite of a love for the vigorous and out-of-doors life, Brisbin seems to have been unshakably determined to seek a career as a writer. Among his ten books are The Campaign Lives of Ulysses S. Grant and Schuyler Colfax (Cincinnati, 1868); From Tow-Path to the White House: The Early and Public of James Abram Garfield (Philadelphia, 1881); and Trees Tree-Planting (New York, 1888). The Beef Bonanza; or How to Get Rich on the Plains (Philadelphia, 1881), is his most memorable and enduring book, providing us with a lively account of the west, and the booming range cattle industry, which he observed very closely. He died in Philadelphia on January 14, 1892, but was buried at Red Wing, Minnesota, in the country which he loved and helped to tame.

It is clear from the following documents never intended for publication (he tells his wife in one letter to hide or burn them), that Brisbin's most passionate expression was in his letters. Occasionally severe in tone, expressing thus his jealousy of his wife, Brisbin can, at the same time, express great tenderness and make us share his anxiety and ardor. We can only guess in what way Jennie had nearly broken his heart.

With one exception, all of the letters reproduced here are written from camps in northern Virginia. Very slight adjustments of Brisbin's punctuation and paragraphing have been made, characteristic spelling has not been changed. Until they are collected and fully edited, the major achievement of this aspiring and significant American author will not have been realized. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to hope that the following miscellany of letters might inspire further research toward a difficult but worthy task.

\* \*This is an error, Brisbin was married to Mary Jane Wagner.

# Letters of Gen. James S. Brisbin to his Wife

Licksville

Sept 12<sup>h</sup> 1862

My Dear Wife,

I have been out all night and am now on the march. I have only time to say I am well. Have nothing to say to those persons you mention in your letter. Do not be seen with them if you do not wish to displease me. Stay where you are and when you are tired go home. Get my pay rolls cashed. They must pay them. Say you are out of money. Lemt Balk if he wants the war over ought to come and fight. He is absent without leave. Madden is not wounded. I will write tonight., Good bye Your own Jim

I have no paper so I must use your old letter to answer on. I stop by the road to write this. Stay in the house. Mind all I say. Jim

(Fragment of Mrs. Brisbin's letter:) That is a splendid plan. That is encouragement. I will close. The mail man will be here soon. Don't you wish you knew nothing. I say it now. Good bye darling take care of yourself. I am making shirts for you. Good bye dear husband, your true and wife Jennie Brisbin.

Camp 6<sup>h</sup> U S Cavalry

Sept 16<sup>h</sup> Buckstown

My Dear Wife

I am well this morning and in fine spirits. Yesterday I was busy all day watching the Rebles. I thought some would fight but did not. We drew up to charge once or twice. Oh my God my dear wife I am sick at heart from the sights I have seen. The town is filled with dead and dying, and I am told hundreds of poor wounded still lay on the field dying. My men work day and night carrying water for the wounded. It is hard to hear the poor fellows beg for a drink of water or for Gods sake to turn their mangled limbs. There was another hard fight yesterday and we whipped the Rebs. Harpers Ferry surrendered to the Rebles yesterday and they took 8,000 prisoners of our men. Genl McClellan is marching on Harpers Ferry take it back.<sup>5</sup> There will be another battle today. I will not be in it as I am ordered to stay here. I was within a mile of the Rebles last evening. They are all drawn up on the hills for miles and are ready for a fight. Write me all the news. The mail is waiting. We did not send any mail yesterday so you will get two letters by the carrier. We have got so many prisoners here we don't know what to do with them. We have nothing for them to eat and they are mostly ragged and bare footed. I took some yesterday who thought they would be shot by the Yankees if taken. I will likely leave this [place] tomorrow.

In haste your own devoted and loving husband Jim P.S. Is Madden at home? He is reported "absent without leave." Keep these letters to yourself. Do not let them lay around loose. Burn them or put them in your trunk and lock them up.

Camp 6<sup>h</sup> U.S. Cavalry

Near Falmouth

Jan 18<sup>h</sup> 1863

8 oclock PM

My Dear Wife

I am still here. I was all ready to start away but got orders to remain just when I was starting. My troops are gone. I will go some time tonight. Captain Claflin is now in command of my troops. The army is moving. "Boots and Saddle" just sounded in the camps of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>d</sup> Dragoons. Genl Burnside's will move some time



# Letters of Gen. James S. Brisbin to his wife.

during the night. Camps are disappearing hourly and troops are taking up the line of their march. Col Mix (John the red man) was here.<sup>6</sup> He has resigned in the volunteers and come back to his regt. the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoons. He is a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. in the 2<sup>d</sup> Dragoons. All the regular officers nearly are leaving the volunteers and coming back to their old regts. I would rather be a Lt. in the regular army than a col. in volunteers. Poor McLaughlin was here and bid me good bye. I never expect to see him again. He is in the infantry and I expect the infantry will be cut into ribbons. I have got a fine command. They may treat me badly when there is nothing doing and the army still but when danger comes I always get a good command. They can't "rub it out" that I fight well. I think the cavalry will take a prominent part in this battle. I am in fine spirits for I really think we are going to have a great battle. The line of my men will be six miles long as far that is as from your house to Pine Grove. So you may have an idea of how busy I am. I must find out the ground and where the enemy lie. There will be no sleep for me tonight. Tucker will give a big supper to all the officers tonight. Poor fellows it will be the last supper for many of them. I ate dinner with Harry Laniner not long before he was killed. I have just got a letter from you, and am sorry to hear you were sick. I hope you will be well before this reaches you.

Captain Berry of Genl Smiths<sup>7</sup> staff has just been. He will go with me tomorrow. I know more than I can tell you for my letter might get lost. We are going to risk all will have a terrible battle. May God for your sake spare my life. I must close for now I have to go to the camp of 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Dragoons and to the Hd Quars of Genl Sumner yet tonight. The artillery is going by in long lines. Two staff officers of General Barreys staff have just been here. I must go and see my friend the Baron von Hamerstein for I am indebted to him for the fine command I now have.<sup>8</sup> If he had not interfered in my behalf I should probably have been in arrest yet. I will try and write you tomorrow but may have no chance. Keep up your spirits, all will go well. I will come out safe. Oh my dear wife if I could only kiss your sweet lips once I would die content. Pray for me. God bless you. I kiss you in imagination. My horses stand at the door ready saddled. Bands are playing, horses are galloping, flags flying and troops marching. Oh this is war -- glorious war. Oh if I could only press you to my heart and give you one more kiss I would be content but it cannot be. In ten minutes more I will be in saddle and flying over the ground. Again I say fare well and be of good heart. My own dear wife farewell. Your Jim

Camp 6<sup>h</sup> US Cav

Catletts Station

June 8 1863

Dearest Wife

Yesterday I received a very pleasant letter from you. You seem in good heart and happy. Oh my wife what has been taken off my mind. Now if Mother and you can get along I will let the whole matter drop and the past be past and forgotten. You should not allow your temper to get the better of your judgement. Your temper like your passion often leads you to do wrong things. You ask me if I hear from Leah Bhymyre. No I do not write to her nor do I ever hear from her. I sometimes get letters from Bellefonte. Why do you ask these questions? Now dear wife be a good girl and do not give me any more trouble. Indeed you have nearly broken my heart but if you be good will never regret the trouble I have had. You are worth it all. I love you more and more each day. The longer I am from you the stronger my love becomes. You say truly we never know how much we love each other until we are parted. But let us bear patiently our hard lot. It will end by and by and we will be united and happy. I am

## Letters of Gen. James S. Brisbin to his wife

trying to do my duty and I know you will love me all the better for it. The man who would not be true to his country would not be true to his wife. I am as true as steel to both my country and my wife and in return for my fidelity and devotion I know that my country honors me and my wife loves me. When we get older we will look back with pleasure to these hard times and smile at the recollection of how sorely our patriotism and love was tested. But no matter how long we may be separated our love will endure and we will be same devoted husband and wife living only for each other.

Now let us be contented and wait patiently for the result of the future. We cannot be happy for neither is happy, only when we are together, but if we cannot be happy we can at least be patient and bear our separation with resignation. I think of you constantly day and night and you never can wish more anxiously to be with me than I do with you but it is impossible for us to be together just now. We are still here but expect to move today. Hooker is over the river but there has been little fighting as yet. My opinion is the Reble army is not there. Pleasanton is here. Genl Stoneman thank God is coming back. We will no doubt have a battle soon but do not be uneasy, all will go well with me. Stuart is in our front with a big force of cavalry. I only wish Stoneman was here. I have no confidence in Pleasanton. I may not write for several days as the mails will stop as soon as we move. Two kisses. God bless and protect you. Pray for your own devoted and loving Jim

Hd Qurts 6<sup>h</sup> US Cavalry

Near Warrenton, Va.

Sept 6<sup>h</sup> 1863

Dear Wife

I have been up to my eyes all day in papers and have a clerk writing besides. I feel quite tired but will write you a line. My leg is much better. We had a dress parade today and what is left of the old regt. looks fine. We will have a mounted inspection tomorrow at 10 oclock. I am going to try and ride. There will be preaching tomorrow afternoon in my camp by the Rev. Hartsock and all sinners are invited to attend. We have preaching every Sunday and all officers have to attend. Genl Pleasanton is a regular attendant and so is Genl Meade.

I hope you have got over your trip and that you are in good health, safe at home and enjoying yourself. Write often and so will I. It is late and I am sleepy. Good night

Your husband Jim

Camp 6<sup>h</sup> US Cavalry

Near Rappahannock River

Nov 10<sup>h</sup> 1863

Dear Wife

Here I am seated in my tent with a big log fire blazing in front. This is away out on the Rappahannock. It is quite cold tonight and the wind howling through the trees. Our camp is in a thick pine woods and pretty comfortable. I was over at Genl Meades Hd Qrts which is close by supper this evening with Genl Patrick and his staff. I like the old genl. very much and he is quite fond of me. Many think him cross but I always found him one of the best natured men in the world.<sup>10</sup> I am looking for a letter from you every day and I am quite anxious to



# Letters of James S. Brisbin to his wife.

get one. I do hope you will be very particular about writing and send your letters regularly for I am so unhappy when I don't get my letters. Write every mail. I am very lonely and think constantly of home; but I must not repine. We will lay here for eight days until they build the rail road up to this point then we will go on and I suppose a great battle will fought. Genl Meade will I am confident fight another battle before the cold weather sets in and he must in less than two weeks or three at furthest for winter is almost here. I dread the next battle for many will and it will perhaps be the hardest of the war. Our men are in fine spirits and anxious for the fray to begin. The army will fight desperately. Oh how I wish this war was over and you and I in some little fort with Co. L. Many officers of the regular army are resigning and bein retired. Lt Brown 6<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cav. has been ordered be retiring board. Capt Hays is here but sick. Maj Morris is in command of the regt. but quite unwell. Carpenter and Bould and Lt Chaffee live in the next tent and we have but one fire so we can all be together.

How are you coming on at home. Do not go out and be very good. I hope you get on well. Do not quarrel with anyone, Do not fret about me. I will get on and come safe back to you. I miss you more than I ever did. You are a very good wife. Knit me some stockings. As some of the army goes into winter quarters I wil for you. I hope it will not be long. How do you feel. Tell Mother to hurry up Genl Williams mittens and mine. It is getting frosty on the fingers these mornings. I may as well tell the truth I could cry I feel so lonely. Oh I wish I was back home again in our little town. My God how I do love you -- no man ever loved a woman so much. You are my life -- my all. God grant your life may be spared and that we may soon meet to part no more. God bless you. Two kisses for you and a final good night, my love as ever Your affectionate husband Jim

Camp near Brandy Sta

November 15 1863

Dear Wife

I confidently expected a letter from you today but got none. I can't imagine why you don't write. You must written but where is your letters. Our mails are very regular now. If you have not written it is very cruel you and careless. I am quite uneasy. I do hope tomorrows mail will bring me a letter. Last night was a bitter and it rained and thundered and lightened all night. Ever got wet but today was a fine day and the warm sun dried us out. This was Sunday and the court did not meet today. We keep Sunday in the army now. It was a lonely day to me. I rode over to Genl Meades this afternoon and spent it with that good old man Genl Patrick. Genl Patrick we will go into winter quarters in a month. I hope so for then I can have you with me.<sup>12</sup> Jim Wade is here tonight. He took dinner with me. Genl Meade is now in Washington. I think the army will move about the 19<sup>th</sup>. This morning at day light our guns opened and the cannonading was very heavy for a little while. We have not heard yet what was done but I think it was Buford attacking the Reble cavalry. It is reported the Rebles are withdrawing from our front. I am getting real homesick again but I should not for I have been home so much. The more I am home the more I want to be there. You are such a good wife and make it so pleasant for me. I always want to go back. If I had some wives I know of I would not want to go home at all, but thank God I got a good wife who I can love and respect and who loves with her whole heart. I hope you are contented.

Some British officers are now on a visit to our Army. They attract a great deal of attention in their red coats. Our band went up to Genl Meades to serenade them tonight. I for my part feel like kicking them. I don't like the British. I am very well and if I were not so lonesome would do very well off. I hope this confounded war a close. I think myself it will soon be over. I have no more to write. You must write every day. Two kisses dear one and a good night from your Jim



# Letters of James S. Brisbin to his wife.

On Board the Mercury

Near Evansville Ind

Nov. 28<sup>h</sup> 1865

My Dear Wife

I am now on my way down the river to Helena and as there is a chance to mail a letter to you I will avail myself of it. I am well and in the best of spirits -- only a little lonely. Col Carpenter with four hundred men and a brass band of the 5<sup>h</sup> Cav. is on this boat. The command is three thousand strong and is on six steamers. We have several officers wives on board but there is only one I have become acquainted with -- a Mrs. Lt Smith. She is from Woodstock Vermont and married, and a very pretty and intelligent woman. I wish you were with us. You would enjoy the trip so much. We three or four babies on the boat and they howl incessantly. I hope baby is good at home. You must show her my picture often so she will not forget how her Pa looks.

Jim Wade is still behind but will join us by rail at Cairo. I am now busy on your letters. I hope to begin my book soon and will try and make it readable,

You must write me often and I will send you a letter every few days. Be a good wife. God bless you Your husband Jim

# Letters of James Sanks Brisbin to his wife

## Footnotes

- 1 For the facts of Brisbin's life, I am indebted to E Warner, Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders (Baton Rouge, 1964), p. 45; Mr. J. Marvin Lee, State College, Pa., has very kindly helped me with material from Centre County-Heritage, October 1971, Vol. 7, no. 2, and John B. Linn, History of Centre County (1883). Gilbert C. Fite's foreword to the reprint of Brisbin's The Beef Bonanza (Norman, 1959), is also valuable. Brisbin's certificate of election as captain, Penns Valley Cadets, 1859, as well as the letters reproduced here, are in the collection of the author.
2. Report of Bvt. Maj. Henry J. Hunt, July 25, 1861 in OR, Ser. 1, II, P. 381.
- 3 Report of Col. James S. Brisbin, Lexington, Ky., Oc 1864, OR, Ser. 1, XXXIX, pt. I, pp- 556-567.
- 4 Virginia W. Johnson, The Unregimented General, A Biography of Nelson A. Miles (Boston, 1962), pp. 181-182.
5. Harper's Ferry fell to Stonewall Jackson after brief resistance. Most accounts mention about twelve thousand Federal prisoners taken. There was to be no major attack forthcoming from McClellan.
- 6 This may refer to Elisha Mix, later brevetted a brigadier general for services in the war, but not appointed to full rank. Winter rains forced the Army of the Potomac into quarters at this time. By January 25, Burnside was replaced by Joseph Hooker.
- 7 The Irish-born General Thomas Alfred Smyth, rendered distinguished service during the Rappahannock Campaign.
- 8 Edwin Vose Sumner (1797-1863) was the oldest active corps Commander in the Civil War. William Farquhar Barry was chief of the artillery defense system surrounding the city of Washington. Baron von Hamerstein may have been one of a number of German-born officers who observed, and in cases fought with the XI Corps, notably at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg.
- 9 On June 9, 1863, Brisbin was to take part in a second fight at Beverly Ford (Brandy Station), the greatest cavalry battle on American soil. J.E.B. Stuart commanded a division of Confederate cavalry. Unknown to Brisbin, Joseph had just replaced George Stoneman with Alfred Pleasanton who was to direct the Federal cavalry corps.
- 10 George Gordon Meade and Marsena Rudolph Patrick were friends and classmates at West Point. General Patrick was a stern disciplinarian, the provost marshal general of the Army of the Potomac. Then aged 52, he was a "good old man" to Brisbin.
- 11 Seth Williams was adjutant general of the Army of the Potomac, serving on Meade's staff.
- 12 Shortly after writing this, Brisbin was sent to Louisiana to recruit Negro cavalry. There was relatively little action in Virginia at the time,
- 13 One month later General John Buford died in Washington, DC of typhoid fever.

James Sanks Brisbin to Jane Brisbin  
Near Richmond, Virginia, 11 August 1862.  
Autograph letter signed, 10 pages.

---

In the field

Near Richmond Va

Aug 11<sup>th</sup> 1862

My Dear wife

I will now go on with my account of our advance on Malvern Hill – The next day after the battle we lay in a field close by the battle ground – Malvern Hill is where the hardest battle of all the seven days fighting took place on the memorable occasion when Gen<sup>l</sup> M<sup>c</sup>Clellan charged his base of operations from the York to the James River. I rode over the battle field and saw many long ridges of yellow clay every here and there which I was informed where the graves of our men who fell in the late battles. Dead horses where laying [*struck*: of] over the field [*struck*: and] and the stench from their rotting Carcasses was insufferable – One fine brick house on the top of the Hill [2] where the Rebel Artiley had been posted was full of Canon ball holes and all the doors and windows were knocked out – It was a beautiful place but in ruins the Canon shot having cut and broken down many of the fine shade trees around it An air of desolation prevaded the whole place –

On the 7<sup>th</sup> I was sent out by Capt Kantz with Capt Gregg to drive in the enemies Projects – Leu<sup>t</sup> Kernin had been out before us but the rebel Infantry had driven him back I saw one of his poor fellows carried to the rear on some poles – he had one ball through the wrist and another through the breast – he was vomiting blood and died in five minutes There were two roads- Capt Gegg took one and I went down the other – I find some of my men in the wood and advanced slowly [3] I crept through the woods [*struck*: slowly] and soon found the rebels posted in the edge of a field – I got up under cover of the Woods to within One Hundred and Eighty-Yards of them. About 20 were standing quite [*struck*: close] at ease under a tree. The Leuitenant who had command of [*inserted*: them] was quietly smoking a Cigar. The men were laughing and talking and holding their horses carelessly – I could have shot some of them but did not want to do it as I was sent to find out all I could and had orders to avoid an Engagement as long as possible – Just

GLC01504.01

ahead of me I could see the Rebels Forts – I counted their guns – Estimated their force and and [sic] having got all the information I desired I fell back – The rebels saw me and I heard the Leutenant give the Command to his men to “Mount but he did not attempt to follow me [4] and it was well for him he did not for as you know my men are armed with- Sharps Rifles and Know very well how to use them – I came back and reported what I had seen and Gen<sup>l</sup> Pleasanton sent Capt Kantz out with – orders to go down to the River get on a Gun Boat and then go up the River with the Boat and shell the reble forts Capt Kantz took me with him and my Company – we reached the River in safety and Kantz went on Board the boat le[a]ving me on shore – I find my men in a barn yard close [inserted: by] and made the old secesh who owned the place give me some oats to feed my horses – The poor brutes had not been fed for nearly 24 hours – The old fellow lived nice and was evidently rich – I went into the house and found an old man [5] and woman – It was now dark and I was going to [struck: get] make them get me something to eat when a man of our Regiment came in and told me the Rebels were Coming – Hee [sic] said there were more than three thousand of the enemy between me and the Camp and that I was cut off and surrounded – I went out and could hear the rebels firing and I knew they were driving back our men I did not know what to do I was more than 3 miles from our Army and thousands of rebels [struck: where] [inserted: were] between me and them – I thought I was gone up – I sat down on a stone to think out a plan of escape. I soon had it You Know how I can “slip” round (Remember our country days) I was determined to dodge the rebels – You will recollect I told you the rebels all have grey uniforms – My men all have grey shirts – I had on [6] the grey shirt you made me – I made my men all take off their blue coats and tie them behind their saddles – It was moon-light but in their grey shirts they looked for all the world like rebels The men set out [inserted: &] pretended as though we were rebels and looking for the “Yankees” I soon came up with a Co of Rebel Infantry but as we were going the same way they were and had [illegible] our [struck: Regents] Skirmishes they evidently thot we were their own Cavalry and so paid no attention to us – A little further on we came up with another lot of reble Infantry – the grey shirts took again and we went on in safety – I was now approaching our lines and would soon be safe – but Just as I was congratulating myself on my escape from the rebels clutches I came suddently upon a whole field full of reble infantry and I trembled in my boots for I feared I could not “sell” so many of them. There must have been at least three thousand of them. I put on a bold [struck: an] [inserted: face] and marched along their front (they were drawn up in line)

the poor rebels suspected nothing and I passed on I had not gone 10 rods however before our own men who were Just ahead formed a volley into us and drove us back close to the rebels. I was afraid our men would take our grey shirts – for rebels and fire on us and so they did I did not know what to do – I did not dare halling to them and tell them who I was or the rebels would fire on [7] me – I saw the rebels were all lying down and I knew not a moment was to be lost for the rebels would soon fire and I expected a rebel officer to come up to me any moment and see who I [*inserted: was*] I knew what men in our army was opposite me – it was my own [*struck: men*] Regiment and I [*inserted: could see them and*] knew also that they knew I was out – So grasping my saber and clenching my teeth. I told my men to follow and plunging my spurs into my horse and yelling at the top of my voice “friends friends dont fire” we dashed into our lines only a few of our men fired [*inserted: at us*] but one ball passed close by my ear and one close by my thigh. The astonished rebels as soon as they saw how they had been “sold” sprang to their feet and sent a thousand balls after us but it was to late I had got into a little woods just a head Their balls flew over and around [8] us but did little harm. only killing 6 men – Sargt Van Reid was knocked off his horse but escaped by hanging to another mans horse – Old Myre the tailor went up and Bugher Walton is dead. Every body thought I had been captured with my whole Company and my appearance Among my brother officers created no little surprise – The sly way in which I sold the rebels created quite a talk in the Army – An old officer said to day it was one of the sharpest things – that had been done in the war – If I can get a paper containing an account of it I will send it to you but papers are hard to get away down here – Our object in going to Malvern Hill was to present the rebels from sending any more troops against Pope – we succeeded they sent down fifty-thousand troops against us that they intended sending against Pope – I was within 9 miels of Richmond nearer than any one else in the army I think We have now fell back 2 miles – We have twenty five thousand men here – We can see the rebels all day long – We do not intend to fight them We only want to make them Keep a big Army here so they cant send any more men against Pope We are now lying in a woods – I write this on a board under a tree. We have no tents and but little to eat but we are contented We are all as dirty as hogs and the flies eat us nearly up If it were not on your account I would like this kind of life – If I was at home with you and out of the army I do not think I [9] enlist again – However since I am in for it I will “put it through” and after the war I will either get a – situation where I can be with you all the time or I will go out of the Army and do some-thing else It is very hot here – I got two letters from you –

GLC01504.01



I will alter my will and make it as you wish – I am not going to get Killed if I can healp it – I dont believe the rebels Can Kill me – I will come home all right see if I dont and then if you have been a good true wife while I was away I will never leave you again – I Know you will be a good wife for you always have been – Mother writes me you are such a good girl – You must write every day – I will have to send a boy about 5 miles with this letter so as to get it Mailed to you I hope he will bring me back [10] a couple of letters from you We have to Keep our horses saddled all the time so we can mount and move at a Moments notice for the rebels may come this way at any time – I was very house sick last night – Oh if I could only see you for a little while how happy I should be Be patient darling I will be home by and by and then you will think all the more of your “soldier boy” for having served his Country when it was in danger We are all delighted that the President is going to draft men – Won’t that wake up the [illegible] – When you write tell me all the news I heard you were in Bellefonte but only one night – Good bye my love I will write you every day if I can

Your own

Jim

GLC01504.01

Camp Thickwood on the Republica  
October 29th 1868

My Dear Jane

Couriers have just / reached us from Genl Sheridan / and I avail myself to send by them / a line to you. The scouts bring / us intelligence [sic] that Genl Carr on / day before yesterday (27th) struck the / indians [sic] on Beaver Creek eighty / miles from here and fought a / battle Killing ten warriors Capturing / and Killing eighty ponies and Compelling the indians to banden [sic] / their tents stores &c. Sheridan says that the indians are retreating in / this direction and Carr is in / hot pursuit [sic] with seven Companies/of the 5th Cavalry. General Bradley will start early in the morning / with four Companies of infantry / and Captain Balls Company of Cavalry / and try to head off the indians on the [Page 2] Republican but I have no idea / they will come up with the indians for I think they have already crossed / the river and gone in the direction of Fort McPherson.

What I want / to say is that this movement may / delay me a day or two in setting/out for McPherson but I will / certainly get to North Platte by the / 7th or 8th at furthest. Come down / as directed on the 6th and wait / at the Hotel until I come. I will / try and get there by the evening / of the 6th but if I dont be patient / and wait until I get along-- / I wrote to Major Havland to en- / gage a good room for you at / the North Platte Hotel and asked/the quarter Master Leiut Drugan, to send up an ambulance to / report to you in the Morning of / the 7th You can ride down to / the Fort if you wish but come [Page 3] back to the Hotel as I shall go/there to find you when I come / in. I have not

[October 29, 1868 continued.]

had a scrape of / a pen from you since I left / Russell except the letter  
Ball / brought me. Captain Ball and / Liut Doane are both well. Please /  
tell their wives. I will not go / out after the indians with Genl /  
Bradley but wait here with the / balance of the infantry.

I think Carrs / fight will hasten the close of the / indian operation  
in this country / as the band he struck is the last / large force of  
savages we know / of in these parts and now they / are badly whipped  
Good bye darling / until we meet. May God bless and Keep you and my dear  
children / Kiss both the babies for me and / say I am soon coming to  
them / and wont go away any more.

Your Husband

Jim

Camp Thicketwood on the Republican  
October ~~28~~<sup>29</sup> 1868

My dear Jane

Couriers have just -  
reached me from Genl Sheridan  
and I avail myself to send by them  
a line to you. The scouts bring  
us intelligence that Genl Carr on  
day before yesterday (27<sup>th</sup>) struck the  
indians on Beaver Creek eighty  
miles from here and fought a  
battle killing ten warriors Capturing  
and killing eighty ponies and com-  
pelling the indians to abandon  
their tents stores &c. Sheridan says  
that the indians are retreating in  
the direction and Carr is in  
hot pursuit with seven Companies  
of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. General Bradley  
will start early in the morning  
with four Companies of infantry  
and Captain Ball's Company of Cavalry  
and try to head off the indians on the

Republican but I have no idea -  
they will come up with the Indians  
for I think they have already crossed  
the river and gone in the di-  
rection of Fort McPherson.

What I want  
to say is that this movement may  
delay me a day or two in setting  
out for McPherson but I will  
certainly get to North Platte by the  
7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> at furthest. Come down  
as directed on the 6<sup>th</sup> and wait  
at the Hotel until I come. I will  
try and get there by the evening  
of the 6<sup>th</sup> but if I don't be patient  
and wait until I get along -  
I write to Major Howland to en-  
gage a good room for you at  
the North Platte Hotel and asked  
the Quarter Master Lieut. Bryan  
to send up an ambulance to  
report to you in the morning of  
the 7<sup>th</sup>. You can ride down to  
the Fort if you wish but come



back to the Hotel as I shall go  
there to find you when I come  
in. I have not had a scrap of  
a pen from you since I left  
Russell except the letter Ball  
brought me. Captain Ball and  
Sut Quam are both well. Please  
tell their wives. I will not go  
out after the Indians with Genl  
Bradley but wait here with the  
balance of the infantry

I think Carr-  
fight will hasten the close of the  
Indian operations in this country  
as the band he struck is the last  
large force of savages we know  
of in these parts and now they  
are badly whipped Good bye darling  
until we meet. May God bless and  
keep you and my dear children  
Kiss both the babies for me and  
say I am soon coming to them  
and won't go away any more.

Yours truly  
 Jim